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What good is Twitter? The value of social media to public service journalism

Report

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EUROVISION

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**WHAT GOOD
IS TWITTER?**

FEBRUARY 2013



WHAT GOOD IS TWITTER?

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO PUBLIC
SERVICE JOURNALISM

By Nadja Hahn

EBU research fellow at POLIS, the media think tank of the London School of Economics, and business reporter at the Austrian broadcasting corporation, ORF.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

5	FOREWORD
6	PREFACE
8	INTRODUCTION
9	WHY DOES IT MATTER?
9	MANY BROADCASTERS STILL STRUGGLE
10	CHALLENGE 1: DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF PUBLIC VALUE?
11	CONNECTING: A PUBLIC VALUE
11	IT'S ABOUT MONEY TOO
13	CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO SOCIAL NETWORKS CHANGE NEWSGATHERING, WHERE IS THE PUBLIC VALUE?
14	FACEBOOK IS A DISCUSSION FORUM
15	TRAPS AND DILEMMAS
16	THE TWITTER BUBBLE AND INFORMATION OVERLOAD
17	CHALLENGE 3: HOW SHOULD PSBs COMMUNICATE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS TO PROVIDE PUBLIC VALUE?
17	CHANNEL 4 AND NOGOBRITAIN
18	REACHING OUT TO THE AUDIENCE
19	#HASHTAG ON SCREEN
19	AUDIENCE FEEDBACK
20	ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE JIMMY SAVILE SCANDAL
21	MORE TRAPS AND DILEMMAS
21	ARE YOU EVER PRIVATE ON TWITTER?
22	KILLING YOUR OWN SCOOP AND TWEETING THE COMPETITION
22	WHO GIVES A TWEET?
23	SCEPTICISM IN THE NEWSROOM



23	KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
24	SOCIAL MEDIA IN A MULTIMEDIA NEWSROOM
25	CHANNEL 4: ARE SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES OF PSBs A THREAT TO PRIVATE MEDIA?
26	IT'S A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE
26	THE BBC'S COMPETITORS ARE LESS FUSSED
27	DOES FUNDING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
28	SMALL COUNTRIES ARE DIFFERENT
28	RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
29	NEW TECHNOLOGY, OLD VALUES
30	APPENDIX 1
30	EBU SURVEY RESULTS
36	APPENDIX 2
36	THE AUSTRIAN CASE: ORF'S FACEBOOK STRUGGLE
36	DON'T PROMOTE FACEBOOK
37	ORF CAN'T HAVE IT ALL
37	ORF CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT ADVERTISING REVENUE
39	CREDITS



FOREWORD

Nadja Hahn is a business reporter with the Austrian broadcaster ORF. As a public service journalist, her work consists both in finding the big stories and in exploring their impact on people's lives. Most journalists agree that social media not only facilitate, but also add depth to this kind of storytelling. Nadja argues that social media actually improve the public service value of journalism. This is unfortunate because in Austria she is prohibited from using Facebook or Twitter to tell stories.

Nadja works for radio, the most interactive broadcast medium. It is no exaggeration to say that before the Internet gave us Facebook and Twitter, radio was the closest thing we had to a social medium, and the phone-in was the most interactive format out there. Times have moved on, however, and journalism everywhere is adapting to the realities of the digital era in which we live, in order to reap the benefits. Journalists are turning to social media to engage with their audience, as well as to add strength, colour and variety to their reporting.

This paper includes the results of a survey of the EBU's membership about social media in the public service newsrooms. The findings confirm the trends that Nadja identifies and highlight the challenges that she is facing in her daily work. She presents a compelling case in an honest and direct manner. Nadja's paper will be of interest to public service broadcasters who are seeking confirmation about the worth of social media. It will certainly stimulate a debate, as it did when she presented her research to last December's EBU General Assembly meeting in Geneva.

Nadja is the EBU's first journalism fellow at the Polis institute of the London School of Economics. The fellowship was offered on a competitive basis to public service journalists working for EBU Member organizations. I was impressed with the very high level of the applications, and I was confident that when Polis made their final choice, the eventual research would benefit the entire membership. This paper more than repays my faith.

It is with great pleasure that I would like to announce that the Eurovision Media Department will offer another public service journalist the unique opportunity to research and write a paper under the expert supervision of Professor Charlie Beckett. We will shortly invite proposals for another piece of original research into an aspect of contemporary news media practice. I look forward to reading them.

Annika Nyberg Frankenhaeuser
Director, Media Department - EUROVISION



PREFACE

This research paper is a report with a purpose. Its author, who is ultimately responsible for the views it contains, is exactly the kind of journalist who should be using social media. Nadja Hahn is an experienced business journalist with Austria's public service broadcaster ORF. She makes good radio news content that informs the listeners on the critical economic stories of our times. She had already dabbled in social media before embarking on this project but she is limited in what she can do professionally by Austrian regulations. In a clever and pithy blog post for Polis during her stay at the LSE she showed how social media could have improved a recent radio feature she had made. The title said it all: 'What It's Like To Tell A Story Without Social Media And Why I will Never Do So Again'.¹

However, the reasons she sets out in this paper for using social media are not because it makes journalism easier, speedier or fashionable. The case she sets out is that it improves the public service value of the journalism. I have long argued that journalism changes when it becomes networked². It can become more open, responsive, creative and diverse. The use of social media to engage the public can add depth, variety, and reach. It can tap into wider expertise and accountability networks beyond the newsroom.

This paper tests that thesis in the time-starved, resource-constrained world of European public service broadcasting. It sets it in a context where private media is anxious about the threat of online platforms and worried that subsidised channels might reduce the opportunities that they offer commercially. This paper draws in particular upon the mixed media ecology of the UK with its relatively advanced social media networks to show that cohabitation is both possible and desirable for private and public media in the online sphere.

Anyone working for a PSB at any level will learn from this report. Indeed, it has ideas for anyone interested in better journalism wherever it is made. We welcome any responses that you might have. It is designed to stimulate debate and new approaches rather than to advance a single point of view or policy. Each national media market will have different circumstances and each society will have different priorities. But in the end Nadja Hahn's report sends out a clear and urgent message. PSB management across Europe needs to take social media more seriously, to defend the role of PSBs in this new media environment and to invest in adding public service value to the new platforms and networks.

¹ Accessible here <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2012/11/02/what-its-like-to-tell-a-story-without-social-media-and-why-i-will-never-do-so-again-guest-blog/>

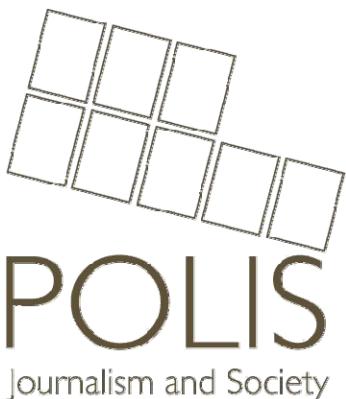
² Beckett, C , 2010, 'The Value of Networked Journalism' (Polis, LSE) Accessible here:
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2010/08/19/new-report-on-networked-journalism-2/>



This report was produced as part of the EBU newsroom fellowship at Polis, the journalism and society think-tank at the London School of Economics. We are grateful to the EBU for their support and to all the many people who gave their time to contribute to the research.

Professor Charlie Beckett

Director, Polis, London School of Economics





INTRODUCTION

"There is no question, if you are not on Facebook and Twitter, you are not getting the full story"

(Lyse Doucet, BBC's Chief International Correspondent.³)

There is no question that messages, images and videos posted on social media like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube have an increasing influence on news production. The continuing 'Arab Spring', the riots in London in the summer of 2011, or 2012's Hurricane Sandy hitting the American north-east coast, are all high profile examples where ordinary people contributed via social media to the narrative of major news stories. 'News' is no longer only defined by the professional journalist. The story might begin and end with the voice of the audience on social media. This is changing the way news organisations do journalism.



In this paper I am going to show how social media activity can help public service broadcasters (PSBs) in particular, to add public value to their journalism. However, this is not a 'new media evangelist' paper. I am from a traditional journalism background and I will take a critical view about what aspects of social media create public value and what do not. I will look at the traps and mistakes to avoid as a mainstream journalist engaging with wider social media networks. I will also ask where we stand in Europe, and have carried out a survey through the European Broadcast Union (EBU). It asks how social media is currently used by PSBs and if there are issues in relation to private competition.

While this is an attempt to get a European overview, this paper focuses mainly on interviews done in the UK. As Britain is one of the most developed social media markets in Europe, its experiences might be of value to other broadcasters who are still "catching up".

³ BBC Academy College of Journalism



WHY DOES IT MATTER?



Social media has become an important source for news and with the rise in the use of Smartphones and tablet computers this trend is likely to continue. In the UK, one in five people come across a news story through a social network like Facebook or Twitter.

More strikingly, 43% of young people, aged 16-24, find their news on social media rather than through search engines. Almost 60% of the respondents say they are more likely to click on a news link that comes from someone they know compared to a link from elsewhere. Most links are shared via Facebook (55%), followed by Email (33%) and Twitter (23%).⁴

These numbers show that increasingly, people don't actively look for news, but instead the news finds them on social media. In effect, young people especially tend to "stumble upon" news.

According to the BBC referrals to its news website via social media increased by 500% between 2010 and 2012. At the end of 2012, the [@BBCBreaking](#) Twitter account had more than 4.5 million followers. On Facebook BBC World had more than 2.5 million "likes", referring to people who follow the account.

PSBs must engage in social media, "because that's where the audience is", says journalist Matthew Eltringham, a social media pioneer and trainer at the BBC.⁵ "People spend three to four times as much time on Facebook as on the BBC websites. This way, they will come back to the website and find more stuff. We simply have to be there for people to access our content. You have to fish where the fishes are."

MANY BROADCASTERS STILL STRUGGLE

Our EBU survey shows that many European PSBs are still struggling with social media. While 65% of the respondents agree that social media provides public value, 46% say they do not have a social media strategy. Half of the respondents say that only a minority of their

⁴ 2012 Digital Report of Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publications/risj-digital-report.html>

⁵ Interview with Matthew Eltringham, October 2012, London



reporters are using social media on a daily basis, only 12% of the respondents say that most of their reporters use it. [To read more detailed results read Appendix 1.⁶]

Social media's rising importance poses several challenges for PSBs. In this paper, I identify four:

1. Does social media add public value and do those activities justify public funding?
2. How do social networks change newsgathering?
3. How should PSBs communicate on social media to provide public value?
4. Are social media activities a threat to the private sector news media?

CHALLENGE 1: DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF PUBLIC VALUE?

"Inform, educate, connect" – the BBC's new understanding of public value
Whenever a PSB introduces a new service, it must be asked: "Is that public value? Why should we do it"? This can prompt a fundamental debate about what a broadcaster should, or should not do, says Dr Damian Tambini, an expert on media regulation at the London School of Economics.⁷

While some argue that PSBs should only cover areas where the private media market fails, the present understanding in the UK and continental Europe is that PSBs should be a universal provider of news. Especially in times when there is so much digital content out there, it is important for the PSBs to provide a public good with the license fee it is getting from the public, says Tambini.

The public good is not defined by cash value benefits, but by other motives, according to Tambini, "particularly education and democracy. There is a 'social glue' argument. Society is becoming more fragmented, diverse, multicultural, and therefore it is more important to have common meeting grounds". These are provided by PSBs.

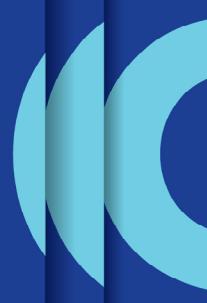
Let us see how the BBC defines its public value purpose in its last Charter, the document that defines the BBC's duties, which is renewed every ten years. The last Charter says: The BBC should sustain citizenship and civil society, promote education, stimulate creativity, represent the UK's nations and regions, bring the UK to the world and the world to the UK – and help deliver to the public the benefit of emerging technologies.

The BBC's mission is to inform, educate and entertain, "supplied by means of TV, radio and online services and similar and related services which make the output generally available and which may be in forms of or by means of technologies which either have not previously been used by the BBC or which have yet to be deployed".⁸

⁶ For a full copy of the survey results please contact mediastrategy@ebu.ch

⁷ Interview with Damian Tambini, October 2012, London

⁸ http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/governance/regulatory_framework/charter_agreement.html



Therefore, the BBC's new social media activities were never questioned in the UK. They were also not subject to the public service test for the BBC that is usually required for new services, according to Tambini.

However, there was still an editorial debate within the BBC as to the value of social media – especially in a time of scarce resources. As this paper will argue, the BBC shows that social media is a tool which can be used to enhance all the public values identified above, if used appropriately.

CONNECTING: A PUBLIC VALUE



Since the last Charter, several BBC senior managers have rephrased its mission, to "inform, educate and connect". This was recently affirmed by Mary Hockaday, head of the BBC's new multimedia newsroom, when she gave a speech at the LSE in October 2012.⁹

"New technology means that everybody can now – if they wish – engage with the news and contribute and comment in completely new ways, sending in pictures or video...Digital also allows our audience to comment, debate and

interact on social platforms, and help us understand the range of views on any topic." This is just one indication that social media is changing the definition of public value, says Tambini. "The gate keeper role of PSB has been weakened and people construct their own editorial structure by choosing who they follow in recommendation based media". PSBs also differ in the sense that "because they have this commitment to universality and openness, it is more important for them than the newspapers to be out there [on social media]". This will feed into the debate about the next BBC Charter, due in 2016, Tambini says.

Whatever the BBC defines as public value, has a great impact on commercial public service broadcasters in the UK, like Channel 4 and ITN. Given that the BBC is one of the most powerful broadcasters in the world and is often considered a role model in Europe, its principles could also influence other PSBs.

IT'S ABOUT MONEY TOO

As newspaper readership declines, public service broadcasters become even more important, says UK media analyst Claire Enders who runs Enders Consulting in London.¹⁰

⁹ Read about Mary Hockaday's speech at the LSE here: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2012/10/19/reith-reinvented-bbc-boss-explains-how-new-newsroom-will-allow-us-to-do-what-we-do-better/>

¹⁰ Interview with Claire Enders, October 2012, London



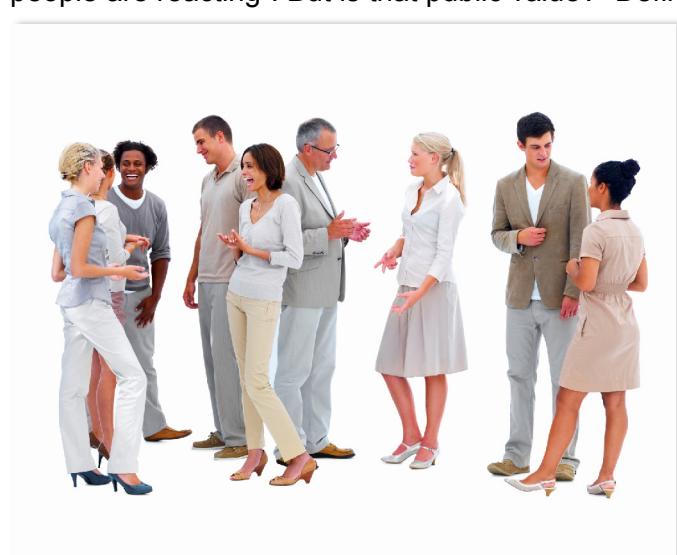
Therefore social media is very important for PSBs. "This is critical; the future means of gaining insight is through distributed algorithms that people distribute themselves". If you restrict PSBs' social media activities, you are hurting the public, says Enders.

But it is also about efficiency, says Enders:

"If you spend 100 Euros of license fees creating something for your website, if that page, that story gets lifted out and transported and hundreds more people see it, that has increased public value. The public value the public gets out the license fee is greatly extended if you get a greater audience."

"I have no doubt that social media enriches the experience of the viewer, it's a dialogue", says Enders. "It's not just a dialogue between individuals and the organisation, but a dialogue between individuals which the organisation is tracking and understanding how people are reacting". But is that public value? "Definitely, for the young demographic, they

don't get as much value out of the programme without that dialogue". Prior to social media, the public also had a voice. People could call into a programme, or write a letter or email. Social media has made this voice more public, louder and more effective.



So, if PSBs define themselves as universal provider of news, with the goal to educate, inform, connect and to provide 'social glue', there is no doubt, they should get their content out on all platforms available to strengthen the public values they have defined for themselves.

Further, while in the past, an elite decided what the public should know and watch, now the audience has a bigger say in these decisions. The top-down approach to public value is complemented by a bottom-up element.

Clearly, not all that can be found on social media is public value. What is and what is not is discussed in the following chapters.

CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO SOCIAL NETWORKS CHANGE NEWSGATHERING, WHERE IS THE PUBLIC VALUE?

*"I wouldn't hire anybody who doesn't know how to use Twitter",
(Joanna Carr, editor of BBC Radio 4 news programme 'PM'¹¹)*

"The way I use social media has completely changed the way I gather news", says Stuart Hughes, world affairs producer at the BBC.¹² Until three years ago, Hughes relied on wire services and the internal BBC news production system for fast information. "Now, very often I will only glance at that". Instead, Hughes uses Twitter, in two different ways.

First, he looks at his Twitter feeds. But since he is following thousands of people, he organises his twitter feeds using hootsuite.com, one of the many free software programmes that help you create lists, according to different topics or people you follow, for example. The lists show up as parallel news streams on your screen. Hughes has created his own personal Twitter newswire, following people he knows and trusts.

Second, Hughes looks at Twitterfall.com, a free programme that allows you to see who is tweeting in a certain area about the subject you are interested in. That is how you could find people tweeting in a small town or region about a disaster, for example.

"I used to wait for stories to drop on the wires. That was the first indication that something was happening", says Hughes. For an example, an explosion is happening somewhere. But between the time the story breaks, it is monitored, written, edited and published, there is a huge time lag, he says:

"Social media allows me to get much closer to story, there are journalists and other people on the ground reporting in real time and sharing it in real time, so by the time a story actually appears on the wire, very often I will have already spotted it through social media".

In fact, Hughes says he does 80% of his newsgathering on Twitter and only 20% on the wire services. Twitter has become a wire service in itself. [You can listen to the interview I did with Stuart Hughes talking about his use of social media.¹³]

Stories break on Twitter. One of the most famous examples is a tweet by Sohaib Athar, a café owner and IT consultant, tweeting about airplanes he heard shortly before Osama bin Laden was captured and killed in 2011. His tweet from May 2 read: "Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1am (is a rare event)". He went on to describe an explosion before he realised what was happening. Then he tweeted: "Uh oh, now I'm the guy who liveblogged the Osama raid without knowing it".

¹¹ Interview with Joanna Carr, October 2012, London

¹² Interview with Stuart Hughes, October 2012, London

¹³ http://soundcloud.com/nadjasnews/stuarthughes_on_socialmedia



In the US the story also first emerged on Twitter, leaked by a former chief of staff to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Keith Urbahn tweeted: “So I am told by a reputable person they have killed Osama bin Laden. Hot damn”. Urbahn’s tweet went viral quickly, because he was a credible source.¹⁴

Twitter can also help find contacts, as a recent example from Hurricane Sandy shows.

Reporter Fred Mogul from New York Public Radio WNYC saw the tweets of a woman trapped in a hospital with a baby during the storm and contacted her on Twitter, producing the following exchange:

Dilcia Cruz @Dilciax3 Windows are breaking in this hospital , power went out. I'm so fuckimg scaredddd 🚫🚫🚫 get me the fuck out of here broooo !!

Dilcia Cruz @Dilciax3 So NYU hospital lost all power, windows were breaking & there was a fire.Thank you God for protecting me & my son & the rest of the patients

FRED MOGUL @fredmogul @Dilciax3 Glad to hear you're safe! Can we at WNYC/NY Public Radio call you at some point to hear your story? 917-572-4700

FACEBOOK IS A DISCUSSION FORUM

Twitter seems to play a more important role in newsgathering than Facebook in the UK. But Facebook has a different purpose, says Anna Doble, head of online news at Channel 4, a UK public service TV channel funded by advertising. “On Facebook you discuss an issue, you can ask specific questions. Twitter is more for exploring news”.¹⁵

Channel 4 News, Produced by ITN, has used Facebook to find teenagers who love playing a popular, but controversial video game called Habbo Hotel. While the game seems harmless, it was infiltrated by some people who posted pornographic content and who were sexually predatory, says Doble. Shortly into the game players would ask teenagers: “Do you want to have sex with me? Shall we talk on Skype”? Channel 4 News covered the story and also posted it on Facebook. Facebook allowed Channel 4 to find teenagers who played the game and to inform them about the dangers. Teenagers contacted on Facebook also joined a TV discussion on Channel 4 online. The Facebook page also had a question and answer session with a child safety expert. [See the report here.¹⁶]

Where is the public value in this? The programme helped raise awareness and prompted the game company to stop chats that allowed abusers to contact young players. “Surely that's good”, Doble says.¹⁷ Further, the Facebook debate reached teenagers that would not have

¹⁴ Nic Newman „Mainstream media and the distribution of news in the age of social discovery“, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, September 2011.

¹⁵ Interview with Anna Doble, October 2012, London

¹⁶ <http://www.channel4.com/news.habbo-hotel-the-debate>

¹⁷ <http://www.channel4.com/news/what-is-happening-in.habbo-hotel>



seen the original report on air. It also gave them a chance to debate the issue online. The Facebook debate continued after the programme and prompted follow up reports.

There is a range of routine editorial uses for social media as well as investigations. PSBs are supposed to hold politicians to account. And as the political parties take to digital platforms, so journalists should also follow social media activities of politicians, says Astrid Salmhofer, press spokesperson for Austria's president Heinz Fischer and social media expert.

"Journalists have to be on social media because often politicians will try to place a message directly on Facebook, in order to bypass the media".¹⁸

Facebook, Google+ or the Business network LinkedIn for example, could also be used by journalists for newsgathering. Journalists should find groups that follow their interest and can post your questions or comments there.

Social Media is also a tool for the audience to send content to broadcasters. For instance, the BBC has a User Generated Content Team that monitors all the content that comes in via email, online forums or social networks. That includes images, videos or text.

Newsgathering on social media is so important to journalism right now, says Joanna Carr editor from BBC Radio 4 news programme PM that "I wouldn't hire anyone who doesn't know how to use Twitter". In fact, it's like picking up the phone.¹⁹

Social networks also give an indication about what people care about. "What flies on social media, will fly on the radio", Carr says.

TRAPS AND DILEMMAS

But how can you be sure who is behind a Twitter or Facebook account? Even those journalists who use social media more often are sceptical. "I would never put out a story automatically after I saw something on Twitter, you always have to check the identity of the people first", says Stuart Hughes. "Most of the time that's easy to do, as most people have multiple profiles on the Internet". Hughes knows most of his sources, because he chose the people he is following on Twitter carefully. "Behind most accounts are real people you know", Hughes says.

However, social media can be tempting. In the heat of a breaking story, journalists can forget basic fact checking. Felix Baumgartner's record breaking space jump is a good illustration of that, says social media trainer Sue Llewellyn.²⁰ She has put together a compilation of Fake Felixes, fake Felix Baumgartner Twitter posts that made the rounds on Twitter.²¹ Thousands of followers retweeted fake tweets, even if one click on the Twitter profile of some would have immediately revealed the hoax. Some of them tweeted even while Baumgartner was jumping, too few got suspicious, Llewellyn says.

¹⁸ Interview with Astrid Salmhofer, September 2012, Vienna

¹⁹ Interview with Joanna Carr, October 2012, London

²⁰ Interview with Sue Llewellyn, October 2012, London

²¹ Sue Llewellyn Fake Felixes Slideshow slidesha.re/RvseMM



Check, double check and recheck, that's the bread and butter of BBC reporter Dhruti Shah. She works on the BBC's User Generated Content Team. She says her team often works like a forensic team. How can you be sure a photo that was sent in is real? For example, you go on Google to check the weather at the place on that day to see if it matches, says Shah:²²

"Social media is just a starting point. Then you follow up with old fashioned means. You phone people to verify name and location, you ask where they took the image and who owns the copyright".

Once the content is cleared by the UGC team, all pictures, videos sent in the audience can be shared on all BBC platforms and programmes, new contacts are put into a database shared by all.

THE TWITTER BUBBLE AND INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Another potential trap is to think what is hot on Twitter is the same as what all of the country is talking about, says Chris Hamilton, who runs the BBC UGC team.²³ If you get too excited by a popular story on Twitter it might give the story exaggerated importance. Twitter is a western, urban network used by a minority of people with particular attributes.²⁴ Facebook is demographically more reflective of society as a whole. Still, people who engage in social media, are a self-selected group.

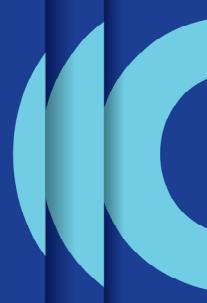
Finally, browsing through social networks can be a time killer, potentially leading to 'information overload' for the time-starved journalist. Many complain that much of the content is useless journalistically. But only if you follow the wrong people, says Sue Llewellyn. "Many people on Twitter think they talk to an exclusive club, that's a mistake, they ignore the audience". Her advice: Stop following them. By choosing people who post things that are valuable to you, "you create your own news. You create a filter and choose your trusted information guides". So, in order to be efficient, you need to be an active content manager who carefully selects the contacts on their network.

Social media can be a great newsgathering tool, if used sensibly. What is the public value in this? Having more sources, reflecting more views, getting the stories faster, taking the temperature of what the audience is talking about. All this can improve the quality and relevance of news stories. It is clearly catering to the public value goal to "inform, educate and connect". Social media is a new newsgathering tool, but it also requires some of the old values of journalism, like checking sources and picking up the phone to ask: "Is it true"?

²² Interview with Dhruti Shah, October 2012, London

²³ Interview with Chris Hamilton, October 2012, London

²⁴ Beevolve: A Study of Twitter Users Across the World <http://www.beevolve.com/twitter-statistics/>



CHALLENGE 3: HOW SHOULD PSBs COMMUNICATE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS TO PROVIDE PUBLIC VALUE?

*"We talk to ordinary people in extraordinary situations. We get information nobody else has.
The audience is at the heart of what we do.
If we didn't do that, nobody would watch the BBC"* (Dhruti Shah, BBC)

News breaks on Twitter. Here's an example: On October 19, 2012 the UK's finance minister, known as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne got caught on the train sitting in first class compartment having only paid for a standard ticket. ITV Reporter Rachel Townsend was on the same train. By chance, she witnessed the incident and tweeted about it immediately:

Rachel Townsend @RachTownsendITV Very interesting train journey to Euston Chancellor George Osborne just got on at Wilmslow with a STANDARD ticket and he has sat in FIRST .

Rachel Townsend @RachTownsendITV CLASS. His aide tells ticket collector he cannot possibly move and sit with the likes of us in standard class and requests he is allowed to.

Rachel Townsend @RachTownsendITV remain in First Class. Ticket collector refuses #standoff .

Rachel Townsend @RachTownsendITV Breaking news: George Osborne pays £160 to stay in first class!

Rachel Townsend @RachTownsendITV HERE is first pic of George - on @GranadaReports website [http://www.itv.com/news/granada/2012-10-19/george-osborne-refuses-to-sit-in-standard-class-despite-not-having-first-class-ticket/ ...](http://www.itv.com/news/granada/2012-10-19/george-osborne-refuses-to-sit-in-standard-class-despite-not-having-first-class-ticket/)

The next day, the UK papers were full with commentary about George Osborne having lost touch with ordinary people. It is an example of how a reporter broke a story on Twitter. Rachel Townsend didn't wait until she could go air with her news, she tweeted the story immediately. She also broke the story even though she had no film footage of the event.

CHANNEL 4 AND NOGOBRITAIN

PSBs can also use Facebook and Twitter to give a community a voice. Since Channel 4 had the broadcasting rights for the London Paralympics, it showed several programmes about people with disabilities. One was about problems getting around on public transport. It began with a launch piece on TV. But reporters found it hard to find people to be case studies. Then they used Twitter to ask people to talk about their experience. "We were astonished by the level of responses", recalls Anne Doble, head of online news at Channel 4.



They set up a campaign. They picked a day and in those 24 hours people documented their journeys on a special @nogobritain Twitter account. People tweeted from the train, bus stop, etc and reported their problems, said Doble. They sent in comment such as: "No one there to help me off the train" or "taxis aren't taking my wheel chair". Doble says this was real interactive journalism:

"We didn't say to people: 'Hey look at our story', we were saying 'tell us your story and we will make it our news'. [You can see the report here²⁵]"

Two people who contributed came as guests into the studio that day. "These are people who at breakfast time we didn't know about, at 7pm they were our guests", Doble says. A few weeks later, Channel 4 News followed up and invited the bosses of three transport companies to discuss problems with people with disabilities on air. "Things changed for the better," said Doble. "They put up ramps in the Tube during the Olympics and they kept them."

The campaign also ran on Facebook. While on Twitter a topic dies down quickly, the discussion continues to this day on Facebook. Audience feedback prompted a follow up show called 'Fly Britain', talking about difficulties people with disabilities have while flying. [See the full news coverage here.²⁶]

So not only did the social media campaign aid the story-telling, it also had a positive impact on society.

REACHING OUT TO THE AUDIENCE

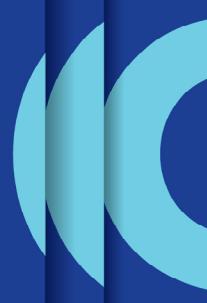
Many PSBs in the UK use social networks to ask a question of the audience. In October Dhruvi Shah of the BBC's UGC team used the Twitter account @bbc_haveyoursay to ask: 'Are you in [#Egypt](#)? What do you think of the decision to pardon 'revolutionaries'? Do you know someone who may be freed?' <http://t.co/ON7LcBNH> Comments found in this way could be published online, contacts could be passed on to programme makers of TV and radio.

Or the team tweets: @bbc_haveyoursay: Hurricane Sandy closes in on US East Coast. Are you preparing for the storm? @ reply us or contact via our story: bbc.in/Q1nrHa http://twitter.com/BBC_HaveYourSay/status/262884961873432576

"We talk to ordinary people in extraordinary situations", says Shah. "We get information nobody else has. The audience is at the heart of what we do. If we didn't do that, nobody would watch the BBC".

²⁵ <http://www.channel4.com/news/your-tweets-tell-the-story-of-24-hours-in-no-go-britain>

²⁶ <http://www.channel4.com/news/no-go-britain>



Hurricane Sandy also provided examples how broadcasters can use Twitter to provide a service back to the effected community:

@bbcworld: How to find the latest official advice, evacuation plans, shelters & high tides as Hurricane #Sandy approaches US bbc.in/TPzj0p
<http://twitter.com/BBCWorld/status/262932027572109314>

@cbsnewyork: If you don't need to stay in a shelter, consider volunteering in one. For a list of shelters near you, click here cbsloc.al/RoKcUe
<http://twitter.com/CBSNewYork/status/262884635854372864>

#HASHTAG ON SCREEN

Social media can also extend the reach of debates that are happening on broadcast platforms. The BBC's news debate programme Question Time uses Twitter to engage the audience in the discussion online. The Twitter hashtag #bbqt is shown on the screen and then questions or comments received via Twitter are used on air such as these from October 17, 2012:

BBC Question Time ([@bbcquestiontime](http://bbcquestiontime))

Q: Why isn't government doing more about gas and electricity prices, when companies still make hundreds of millions in profits? [#bbcqt](#)

BBC Question Time ([@bbcquestiontime](http://bbcquestiontime))

"It is an appalling way [for David Cameron] to treat families and individuals" says [@NicolaSturgeon #bbcqt](#)

Due to the sheer volume of tweets coming in, many programmes have a special person dedicated to managing and reacting to the tweets. BBC Question Time has even experimented with having an additional 'panel member' who is purely on Twitter during the programme.

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Twitter and Facebook can give valuable feedback to programmes, says Vicky Taylor, Commissioning editor for Channel 4 News and Current Affairs. "It is really important to see what the audience thinks, on social media you can check that very quickly".²⁷ Whenever Channel 4 launches a new programme it follows the reaction of the audience on Twitter to see if people like the topic and the people in the programme, says Taylor:

"It gives you a sense of where the audience is going. TV statistics only tell you if people

²⁷ Interview with Vicky Taylor, October 2012, London



watched and for how long, but they don't tell you if people liked the programme or if they hated it. In terms of news you can get an instant reaction on interviews you have done, questions you should have asked, you get feedback on stories, or hear about angles of story you haven't thought of".

Channel 4 also states the importance of putting its videos on the video-sharing platform YouTube. Channel 4 News has 4 million viewers on YouTube, more than it has in its own website, says Channel 4 online news editor Doble.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE JIMMY SAVILE SCANDAL

PSBs can also use social networks to explain their own broader institutional or editorial policies and even problems to the public. The BBC's Jimmy Savile scandal illustrates this. A brief background: In 2011, the BBC news programme Newsnight had investigated a story with women accusing the late BBC entertainer Savile of sex abuse. The story never went on air, it was stopped shortly before the BBC ran a big tribute to Savile. This was revealed in October 2012. On October 22, the BBC current affairs show, Panorama, reported on why the BBC Newsnight programme had been stopped and aired the women's interviews for the first time.

The BBC tweeted news about itself, revealed by its own programme:

BBC Breaking News (@BBCBreaking) BBC Newsnight editor Peter Rippon "killed" [#Savile](#) investigation without watching interviews with victims - [#Panorama](#) <http://t.co/h4uuMTJe>

BBCBreaking (@BBCBreaking) Newsnight producer behind Jimmy [#Savile](#) investigation warned that pulling story would lead to claims of 'cover-up', [#BBC](#) Panorama finds BBC News (UK) (@BBCNews) "There are serious allegations a paedophile ring was operating" at the BBC - Liz Dux, lawyer for [#Savile](#) abuse victims <http://t.co/oRBW24cm>

BBC News (UK) (@BBCNews) BBC director general George Entwistle gave incorrect reason for dropping of Newsnight [#Savile](#) investigation - [#Panorama](#) <http://t.co/sWrpBPkU>

Here's what the audience said that night:

@AkumuFiona: Quite impressive to see #BBC step aside of itself and eagerly report about its own controversies. [#Savile](#) @BBCBreaking
<http://twitter.com/AkumuFiona/status/260511780462292992>

@RedAlertMedia: RT @FlemingSport: Watching #BBCPanorama on [#Savile](#) . How many media organisations would hammer themselves as the BBC is currently doing?
<http://twitter.com/RedAlertMedia/status/260500442809782272>



So even the act of being on social media and inviting comment and communication about this crisis earned the BBC respect from its audience and helped restore credibility.

MORE TRAPS AND DILEMMAS

With so many of their staff tweeting, there is no way editors can control the quality of everything that goes out on social media. That is why social media training is key, says BBC Academy website editor Matthew Eltringham. Two thirds of the BBC's staff has had training for two to three days, he says. No reporter would be trusted to go on air without training, therefore no journalist should be active on social media without training.

Editors must give up wanting to control every line that goes outside and take a leap of faith, says Vicky Taylor from Channel 4. "If you trust your staff to go on air and report to millions of people, you should trust them on social media too".

ARE YOU EVER PRIVATE ON TWITTER?

Many journalists write on the 'biography' for their personal Twitter accounts that their views expressed on Twitter are private. If they are clearly associated with the news organisation, this doesn't make sense, says Taylor from Channel4. "You cannot separate private and public. You should have the same face on Twitter and on television".

Matthew Eltringham from the BBC agrees and says you can test what's ok and what's not easily by asking yourself: "How would the competition respond to that comment in the real world? Would you want to read about it in the paper"?

Do public service journalists have to be more careful about what they say on social media than journalists from commercial stations? No, says Eltringham. "Good practice is good practice", a view generally also shared by Taylor. While Channel 4 journalists must follow the same basic editorial principles as BBC journalists, Taylor says her reporters can show more personality on Twitter in the same way that Channel 4 has a mandate to be slightly different on air.

But in reality behaviour is different – if only in style. And even BBC reporters often walk a fine line on Twitter. For example, should BBC economics correspondent Robert Preston promote his book on Twitter?

[Robert Peston @Peston](#) This is what my new book is about, in case that's of any interest <http://bit.ly/SjXFN5>

[Robert Peston @Peston](#) How to fix the financial & econ mess we're in: a bit more about my book, in the Guardian [#howdowefixthismess](http://bit.ly/Plj2FJ)

[Robert Peston @Peston](#) Very generous review by distinguished economist RT @diane1859: A mess beyond fixing? I review [@Peston](#)'s new book <http://www.enlightenmenteconomics.com/blog/?p=2124>

Peston shouldn't tweet that, says media trainer Sue Llewellyn, he would never promote himself like that on air. But opinions vary, as Peston is promoting his own content. As with any editorial decision, lines can be blurred on social media, but in the end it is up to each organisation to evolve its own rules and practice.

KILLING YOUR OWN SCOOP AND TWEETING THE COMPETITION

If you use social media for research, do you risk killing your own scoop? The chance of that happening in practice are slim, says Jason Mills, online news editor of the commercially funded broadcaster, ITV.²⁸ "It's very hard for a competitor to steal the story. If you are driving the story, it's obvious who owns it". Plus, you don't have to give away too much in a Facebook search or Tweet, says BBC world affairs producer Stuart Hughes. Asking a question won't tell the whole story. In the fast moving 24 news cycle scoops do not stay exclusive for very long anyway. Social media accelerates that process but if you are prepared it can also help you capture the attention generated in the first flush of excitement.

Should you tweet the competition? The BBC doesn't seem to have a problem with that:

BBC Question Time (@bbcquestiontime) Channel 4 has written a Q&A about the energy prices "row" - <http://t.co/EegwvQWV> #bbcqt

Sky News, the commercial rival owned by BBC critic Rupert Murdoch is firmly against promoting content of the competition. Their view is that it would direct traffic away from their pages and weaken the brand. Furthermore, they argue that they have no editorial control over content.²⁹ So again, each organisation will decide on its own strategy.

WHO GIVES A TWEET?

Using social networks like Twitter and Facebook can quickly use up precious journalist time. Many comments on social networks are editorially of little value. Therefore, PSB journalists should think about providing value on social networks. The point is not to add to the dross online, but to add some quality. A study called "Who gives a Tweet" conducted in the US by Carnegie Mellon University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Georgia Tech examined what kind of information Twitter users like and dislike.³⁰

According to the study Twitter users least appreciate Tweets that are part of someone else's conversation; updates on personal moods or activity; convoluted links; links to websites or photos without a message; old news that's done the rounds on Twitter. What people do

²⁸ Interview with Jason Mills, October 2012, London

²⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/feb/07/sky-news-twitter-clampdown>

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2012/02/07/sky-news-never-wrong-for-long-on-twitter/>

³⁰ <http://www.cmu.edu/homepage/society/2012/winter/who-gives-a-tweet.shtml>

<http://needle.csail.mit.edu/wgat/about.php>



appreciate according to the study are tweets that include questions to followers, information sharing, and self-promotion, such as links to content the writer has created.

According to social media trainer Sue Llewellyn, a good public service tweet or post should be “useful, tell you where to get help for example, and spread correct information”. Further, it should inspire curiosity or engage the audience emotionally.

Reporters also need new writing skills. Writing for Twitter is different than just writing news headlines, says Mark Frankel, social news editor at the BBC.³¹ You need to ask a question or take out an interesting quote or fact to make your tweet interesting. You also should avoid automatically copying tweets on Facebook, as that would be too much and could annoy users, he says. On Facebook you engage the audience in a debate about a special topic or share user content, like picture galleries.

SCEPTICISM IN THE NEWSROOM

But because so many conversations on social networks can provide little or no value, levels of engagement are dropping on social networks, says Llewellyn. That's why she says it is important for PBSs do the job right, especially since social networks are here to stay. “You can't ignore the numbers. The audience is doing this”.

Many newsrooms have social media sceptics who question the usefulness of social networks. “You can't force people to engage with social media”, says the BBC's Matthew Eltringham:

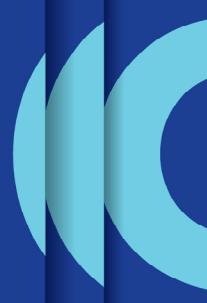
“You should find a few leaders, ‘rain makers’ who can break the dam. It was funny watching some of our TV correspondents saying ‘I don’t need Twitter’, but then they saw that their colleagues had many followers and got good stories out of it. So they quietly said ‘Can you teach me?’”

Most newsrooms and individual reporters have a personal moment when “the penny drops” and they recognise the usefulness of social media. A national election, a disaster, or simply an embarrassing event when two reporters from different media are on the same story, but only one has the scoop because he or she tweeted about it first.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

However, not all the audience is on social media. Warns BBC Radio 4 ‘PM’ editor Joanna Carr. PM’s audience tends to be older and prefers communicating with the programme via email and not via social networks. The programme stopped one of its blogs, because she realised too few people were following it. That is why Carr says she isn’t willing to put too many resources into communicating on Facebook at this point. Yet, for newsgathering, she considers social networks vital, as her previous quote illustrates: “I wouldn’t hire anybody who doesn’t know how to use Twitter”.

³¹ Interview with Mark Frankel, October 2012, London



Social media can be a valuable way for PSBs to communicate with their audience. PSBs can get news out faster. They can engage the audience in a debate. They can provide a platform for that debate. They can hear more voices and receive more video and picture content and share that with the audience. They can reach a new audience for their programmes, for example when young people tune into news programmes because they saw a link on social networks. PSBs can explain their own decisions. All this supports public value goals such as promoting education, democracy, social cohesion, transparency and accountability. Yet, PSB journalists must treat social media with the same editorial respect as for on air reporting. PSBs should recognise that social media communication requires specific skills and should train their staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN A MULTIMEDIA NEWSROOM

*"It shouldn't be up to the audience to come to us, it's up to us to find them".
(Mark Frankel, manager of the BBC social news team)*



This photo shows the new multimedia newsroom at BBC New Broadcasting House where radio, TV, local, national and international BBC journalists have been brought together. The table in the middle includes heads of TV, radio, online including social media. Mark Frankel manages a social news team, a group of journalists who are monitoring news on social media and write posts on Twitter, Facebook or Google+ sending out news headlines and promoting BBC content across all platforms.

Frankel explains why it is important to have this team at the centre of the newsroom:

"The social news team have to work closely together with Internet team. The website is constantly being refreshed. It would be nonsense for them to sit separately. We need to ensure that every tweet and post on Facebook is complied by journalists around them and matches the content on the website."



Frankel says this is especially important for getting the facts right on breaking stories but it is also important as a way to ensure that editorial values or priorities on social media matches those of the rest of BBC output:

"If you sit in an office somewhere else, the danger is that you are posting something that you think is interesting but that it isn't working well for the website and the wider newsroom".

To that end members of the social media team also attend all editorial meetings, so they know what the different departments are planning during the day.

What's the public value in this? The audience gets a coherent product and is not hearing different takes on the same story on different platforms and that increases credibility, Frankel says:

"I see what we are doing as absolutely central to driving audiences that may not be naturally going to BBC content back to BBC content, so when people click on a BBC Facebook post they are being directed to the BBC website and BBC content. If people are no longer consuming TV and radio as they used to, social media is an important marketing tool. I think you have an obligation to enter their space. It shouldn't be up to them to come to you, it's up to you to find them".

As the importance of Frankel's team is increasing, he is now planning to introduce a night shift. The BBC therefore has a dedicated social media news team on top of the social media activities done by its reporters individually but which tries to synchronise its work with the rest of BBC production.

CHANNEL 4: ARE SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES OF PSBs A THREAT TO PRIVATE MEDIA?

"Even if the BBC shut down their Internet service, we wouldn't change our business model" Tom Whitwell, online editor of The Times newspaper³²

Whenever a PSB introduces a new service, it can be reason for the private media to assess the impact on their business. Social Media is clearly making the Internet presence of PSBs more powerful. Given that PSBs are funded by license fees and that the private media wants to earn money with their online news, there could be an argument about fair competition in the media market.

In Austria for example, the private media have taken the Austrian public broadcaster ORF to court over its Facebook pages. The case is still pending but ORF's use of social media is limited by law. ORF is not allowed to provide links to Facebook or Twitter on its online content, nor can it encourage its audience on air to engage in a conversation on social

³² Interview with Tom Whitwell, October 2012, London



media. ORF is mainly license fee funded, although about 30 percent of its revenues come from commercial activities.

The argument of the private media is that if the ORF promotes itself on social networks like Facebook, advertising revenue spent by Austrian companies would go to Facebook and not to the other media's Internet pages; that would kill their business model online. You can read more about the Austrian case in Appendix 2.³³

Being Austrian, this prompted me to ask if other European PSBs were facing similar problems. My EBU survey had limited responses at the time of writing but only the Swedish broadcaster spoke about problems with commercial competitors. This clearly isn't representative. The unanswered question remains: Did PSBs not reply to this because it is politically sensitive, or because it is not an issue? You can see the EBU survey results here³⁴. Therefore, I can only conclude that I know of no other similar cases in Europe.

IT'S A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

In the UK, the BBC's social media activities were not generally criticised by private media, says UK media analyst Claire Enders. To her, it's a question of social justice: "Everybody can promote himself on social media, even Putin can have followers", she says. Enders also thinks the money argument is exaggerated: "The Internet hasn't turned into a pot of gold for any media company", she says, adding that nobody was getting rich with ads on social media pages, not even Facebook, because it is 'penny business'. So if there is little money to be made, there is little money to be lost. "The UK media companies do not fight over stuff that's fluff", Enders says.

THE BBC'S COMPETITORS ARE LESS FUSSED

This is an argument shared to a large degree by the BBC's competitors. The BBC's social media activities are "not at all" a threat to Channel 4, which is a public service advertising revenue funded channel according to Vicky Taylor, commissioning editor for new media. "We just have to be different and more interesting, she says. "You target where your strengths are". For Channel 4 this is particularly groups such as educated young people, while the BBC has to cover a wider market, Taylor says.

Taylor also does not see a commercial disadvantage, since ads on social networks like Facebook are less effective, she says. Ads are much more effective on the branded Channel 4 web pages, Taylor says, especially video ads on their news clips. "That's where you get the eyeballs".

Taylor's views are also shared by another BBC competitor, ITV. According to Jason Mills, ITV Online Editor they have to accept the fact that the BBC is in the digital sphere:

³³ Appendix 2: The Austrian Case ORF's Facebook Struggle

³⁴ EBU survey: please contact mediastrategy@ebu.ch for more details about the survey



"If the BBC didn't use social media it would help us, because their content wouldn't be shared in the same market our content is being shared. But you have to be grown up about it and say, they should be allowed to play in the same market as everybody else, otherwise they are doing their viewers and users a disservice. We are in a competitive society. If you've got unique content, good content, that's how you stand out".

Even the BBC's biggest critics, the news companies owned by Rupert Murdoch, only appear to worry marginally about the BBC's social media activities. They have attacked the overall size of the BBC in media markets in general but no social media in particular.

The Times has changed its business model online to make readers pay for content with some limited success. Even so, it does not object to the fact that the BBC's social media activities are promoting the BBC's free web content, says Tom Whitwell, Online Editor for The Times:

"If you suddenly turned off the BBC as a source of news online, would we reverse our business model and give away stuff for free? I very much doubt it. Five years ago, the BBC's social media activities might have been an issue for The Times but things have changed. You don't compete with institutions for attention on the Internet anymore, but with individuals, so anyone who says something interesting gets attention".

However, some concerns remain, even in the UK. Whitwell says there are concerns with the BBC extensively promoting its free content websites on air. Jason Mills from ITV is concerned about BBC Worldwide, as it generates commercial revenue with the same BBC content that is financed by UK licence fees. As ITV wants to grow its online presence outside the UK, he thinks the BBC has an unfair advantage abroad.

This leads to the next question:

DOES FUNDING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

If PSBs extend their services, by adding social media, it could also be reason to question their funding model. Is it fair to allow them to offer more services to the public, especially if they are partly commercially funded? Should PSBs revert to license fee funding only?

In Austria, critics of ORF say that if the public broadcaster reverted to a license fee only model, it would not have to face restrictions, according to Klaus Schweighofer, who represents Austria's private broadcasters.³⁵

It is another argument not entirely shared in the UK. Vicky Taylor from Channel 4 says if it is clear than you can only survive with commercial revenue, you should be able to commercially exploit video assets and use social media, "otherwise you would collapse". Even though Channel 4 is also considered a public service broadcaster, nobody has ever questioned its right to promote its content on all platforms, she says.³⁶

³⁵ Interview with Klaus Schweighofer, September 2012, Vienna

³⁶ Channel4 funding and public purpose <http://www.channel4.com/info/corporate/about>



ORF could not survive without commercial revenue, says Thomas Prantner who is in charge of ORF's online activities. A simple cost comparison with the German PSB ARD shows this, he says: The German TV station ARD has ten times the license fee revenue, but newsrooms in Germany and Austria cost almost the same. "Of course we have to be co-funded".³⁷

SMALL COUNTRIES ARE DIFFERENT

Indeed, it is easier for large PSBs to revert to a license fee model only, like in France, says media regulation academic Dr Damian Tambini at the London School of Economics. In small countries you can't do that "without compromising quality".

In an environment where news is increasingly consumed through recommendation on the Internet, PSBs should be allowed to participate in social media, Tambini says:

"If you don't do that you create a death spiral for public service, because you are continuing to pay large amounts to produce content but you don't have to impact on the audience for that content".

There should be a social and political debate about what PSBs should offer, Tambini says. "It would be useful to have a consensus what broadcasters should be doing in an all-digital age. That's something that needs to be articulated by parliaments".

What the experience in the UK shows is that the BBC's social media activities are not excessively distorting market conditions in the UK, as confirmed by the UK private media.

The fact that a PSB is license fee or commercially funded also need not make a difference to the competition argument.

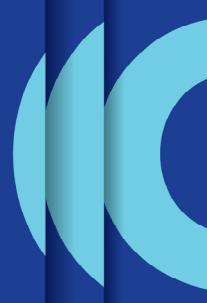
Especially in smaller countries, it seems PSBs can only survive with additional advertising revenue. If there is social and political consensus in those countries that they should continue to exist and offer universal news to the public as a whole, then the funding model should not be put in question as a countertrade for offering new services that can deliver public value, such as social media. National regulators and media legislation should clearly state the rules of the game.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Social Media is an important tool to add public value to public service broadcasters. If PSBs do not engage in these activities, for editorial or legal reasons, then they are not using all possible means to deliver public value to their audiences.

Social Media is also changing the definition of public value, since the voice of the audience has more influence on editorial decisions than ever before. Therefore, regulation that limits

³⁷ Interview with Thomas Prantner, September 2012, Vienna



the social media activities of public service broadcasters stands in the way of delivering public value to the audience. Media laws should clarify the role of new technologies.

Here are some ways that PSBs should react to the rising importance of social media:

1. Provide social media training to staff.
2. Provide adequate equipment to staff: reporters need smartphones as business phones and personal lap tops or tablets.
3. Define a social media strategy with editorial guidelines.
4. Establish a culture of audience feedback across programmes on air to encourage audience participation.
5. Define goals for what social media activities should achieve. These will differ according to the characteristics of the audience of the individual programmes.
6. Give social media activities a central role in the newsroom. Coordination of content across all platforms, TV, radio, websites and social networks is key.
7. Have a great multimedia website to link to.

NEW TECHNOLOGY, OLD VALUES

Social media is not a revolution of journalism for PSBs, it is evolution. It is a skill, like interviewing. It is a tool like the mobile phone. New technology and the Internet is clearly changing journalism, but social networks still require traditional journalistic values, like fact checking, accuracy, objectivity and communicating what is relevant and interesting.

Social media cannot be outsourced to a web team. It's every reporter's job. It needs to be an integral part of the daily routine of researching and communicating.

Yet the importance of social media should not be overrated either. The most important task of PSBs is to produce top quality TV and radio programmes. But Internet services such as social media can add value to those programmes and help PSBs create better programmes and reach a larger audience. That 'difficult to reach' demographic of young people are especially open to being drawn to top quality news that way.

Social media is not a fad. Interaction and information sharing on the Internet is here to stay, even though platforms and styles might change in the future. Therefore, extending journalism to social networks is vital to PSBs and it is an opportunity to provide more public value than ever. Missing the opportunity to play a vital part in social media is a threat to the PSB's future at a time when all public services, including media, are being scrutinised for efficiency and value to society. In particular, it is a challenge to PSB management. Who wants to be the boss who will be accused of failure because he or she had refused to take the plunge?

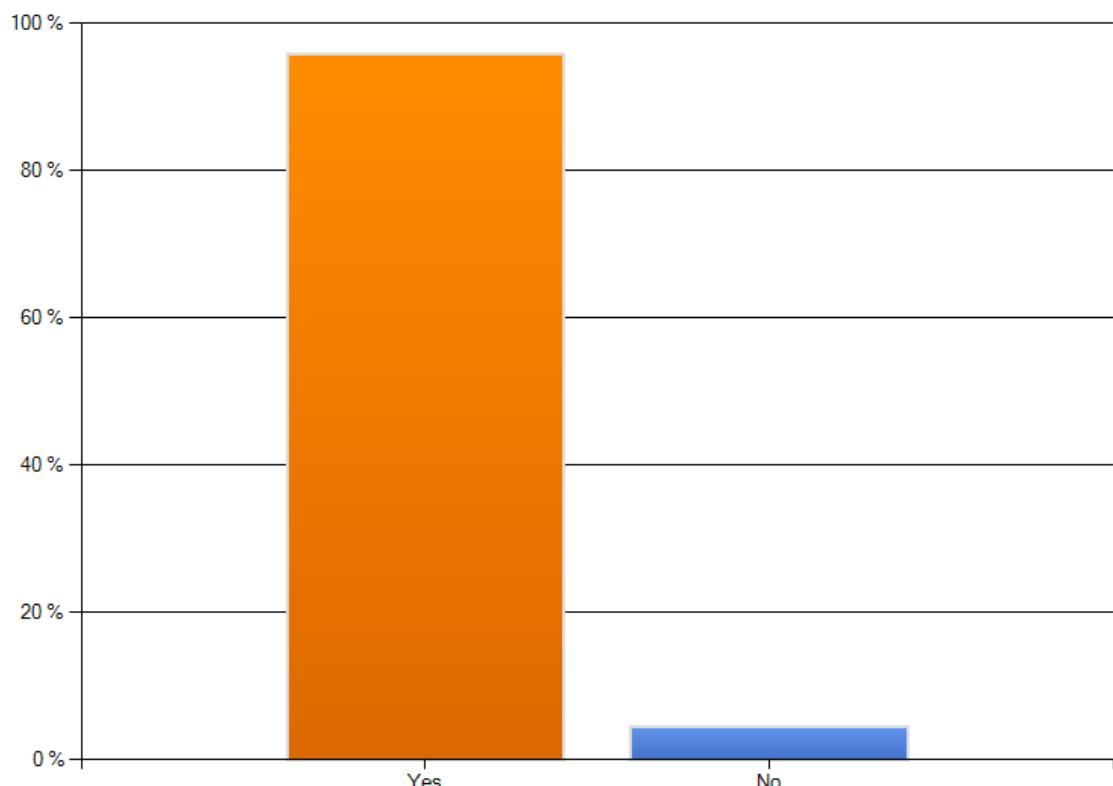
Nadja Hahn
@nadjasnews
January 2013



APPENDIX 1

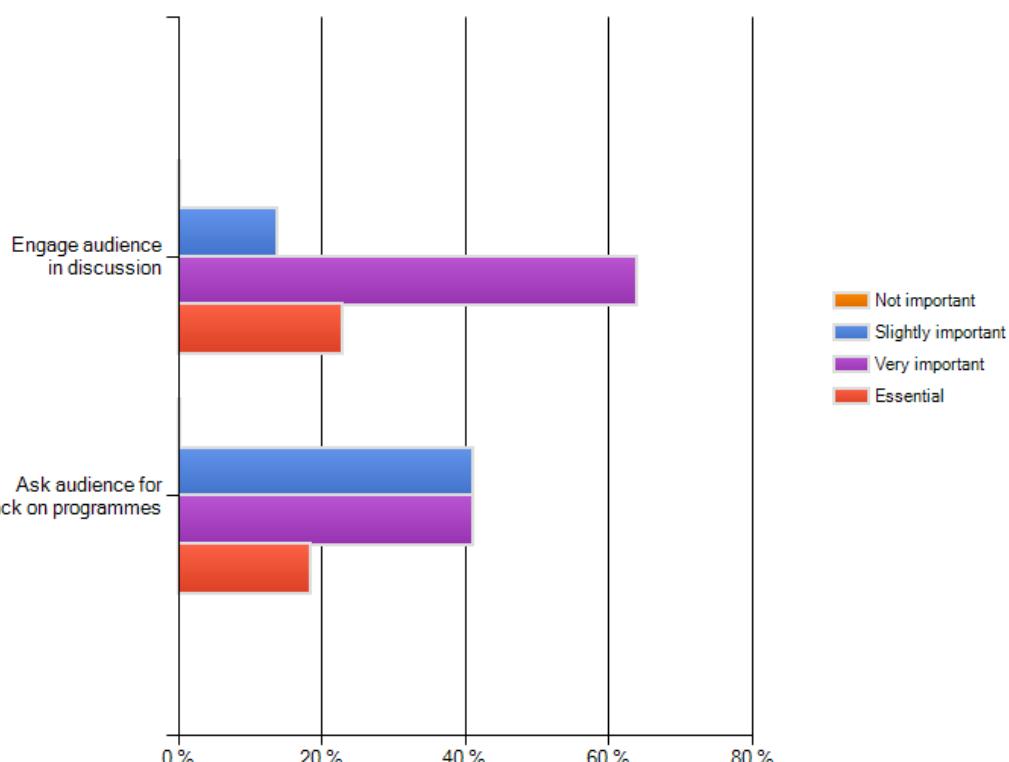
EBU SURVEY RESULTS

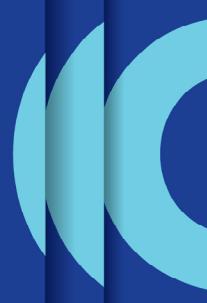
Do you consider your social media activities offer added value to your listeners?



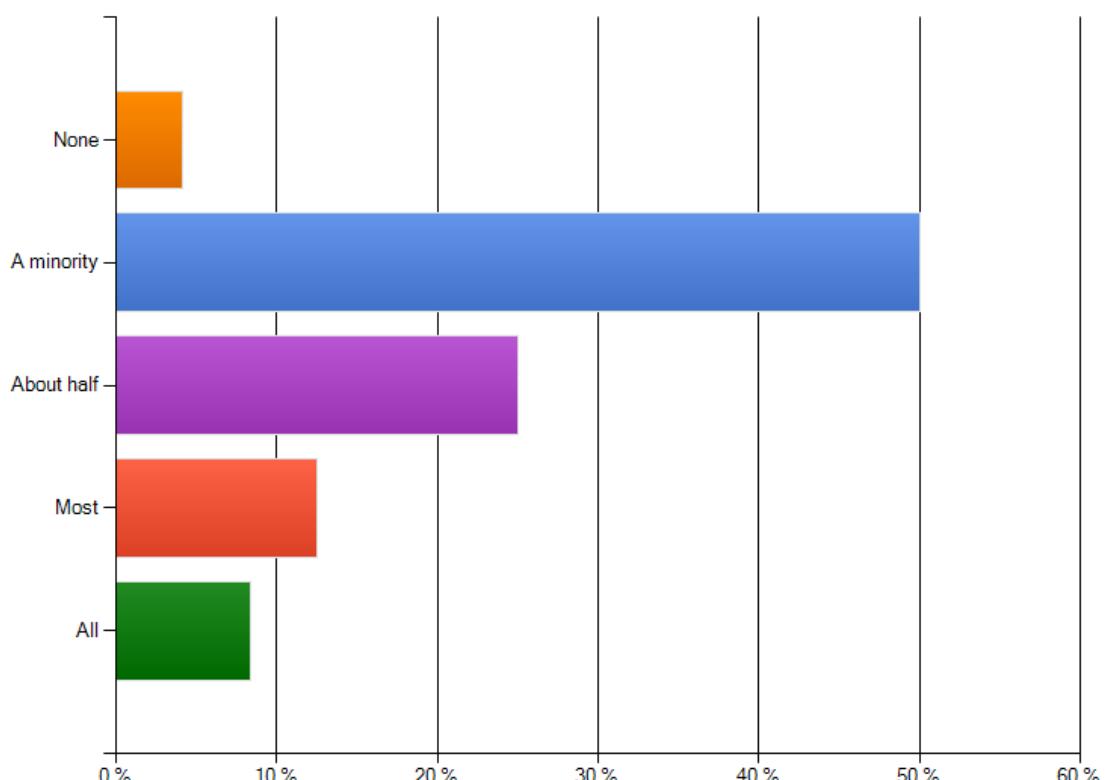


If you use social media to communicate with your audience, please indicate the importance each of the following reasons for doing so:



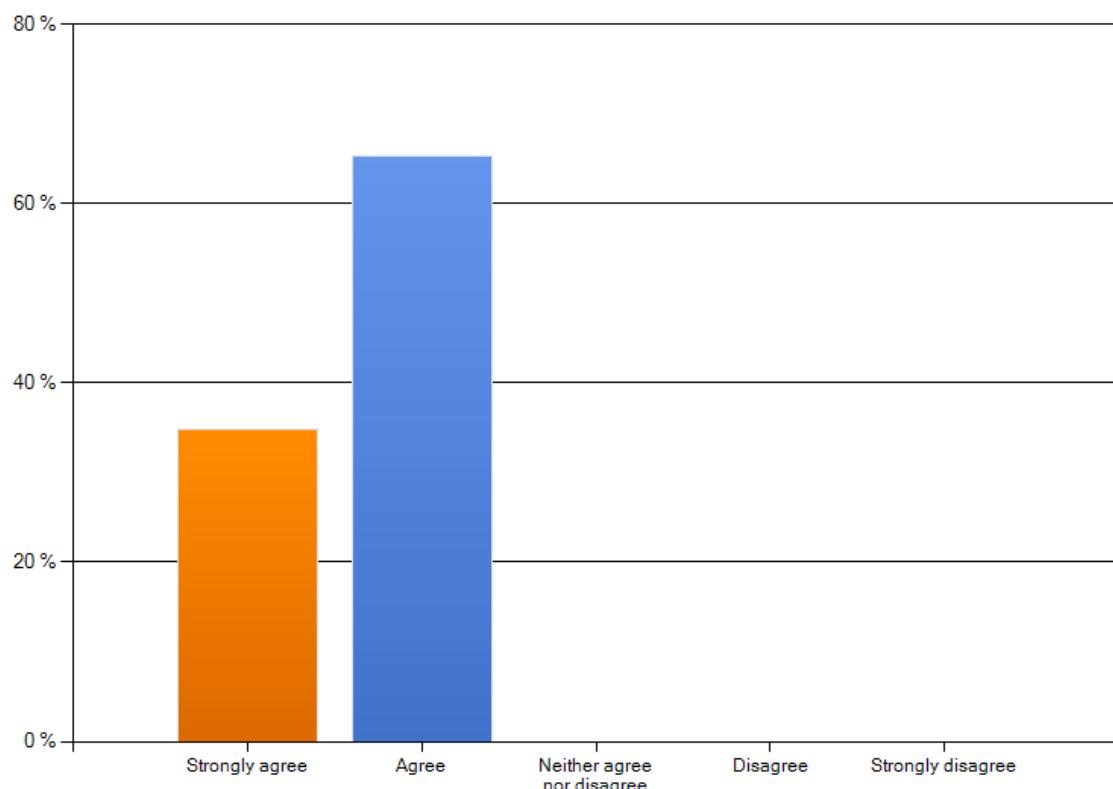


How many of your journalists use social media every day for their work?



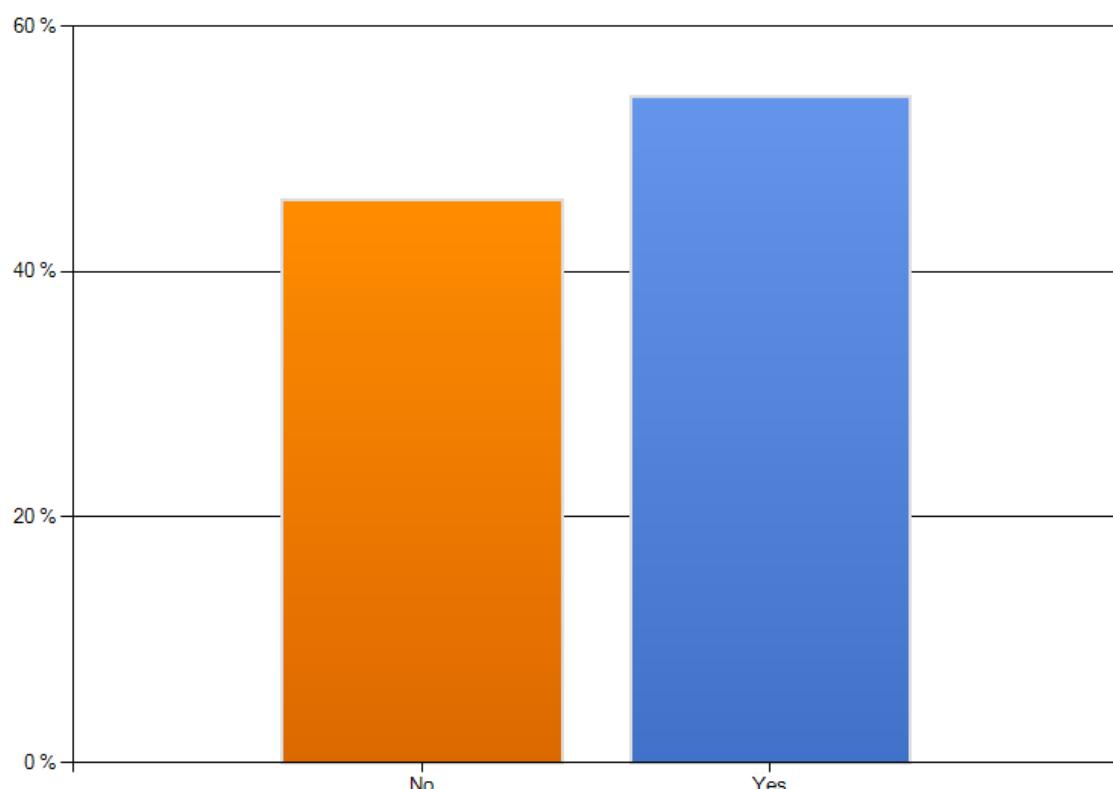


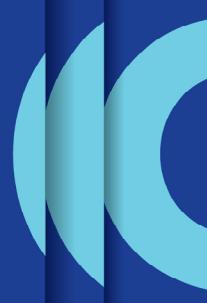
Social media activities provide public value.



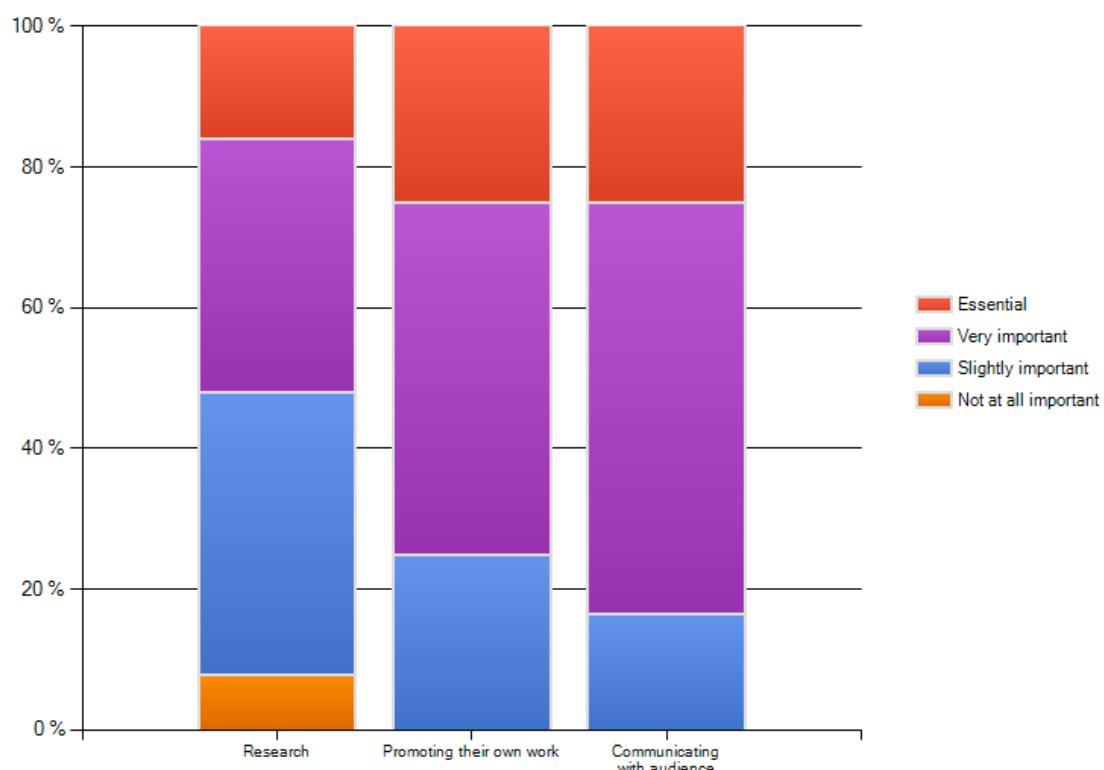


Do you have a social media strategy?





For those journalists who use social media, please indicate how important it is for each of the activities below:





APPENDIX 2

THE AUSTRIAN CASE: ORF'S FACEBOOK STRUGGLE

As mentioned in Chapter 4, ORF's social media activities are limited. According to the media law that regulates the ORF passed in 2010 (ORF Gesetz), ORF cannot collaborate with social media companies, nor can it officially link its content to social media pages.³⁸

The limitations are in place, because the private media fear unfair competition in the online advertising market. ORF generates roughly a third of its revenue from advertising, the rest comes from licence fees.

ORF has several Facebook pages and many ORF journalists have Twitter accounts. The private media argues that ORF's Facebook pages are illegal, based on the current law and have taken ORF to court. Previous court rulings have upheld the claims, but ORF has repeatedly disputed the rulings and a final decision by the Austrian Constitutional Court is still due.

However, if and how ORF's social media activities hurt the private media financially, is hard to nail down.

DON'T PROMOTE FACEBOOK

Does ORF's social media presence take away online advertising revenue from the print media? Gerald Grünberger, who represents the newspapers in Austria (Verband österreichischer Zeitungen VÖZ) thinks so. He accuses US internet platforms, social networks and Google of crippling the Austrian advertising market.³⁹

"It's not about ORF taking the money. It's about promoting those platforms. If you say on air, 'go to our Facebook page', it diverts traffic there, and therefore it diverts money there".

"Why does the ORF radio station Ö3 promote an ORF TV interview on Facebook? Why don't they promote their own web page?", Grünberger asks. He does not accept the argument that links sent via social media have a more powerful viral effect online: "Facebook is not the only way ORF can talk to its audience".

That said, most Austrian newspapers do have their own Facebook or Twitter pages. If ORF had no advertising revenue and was fully licence fee funded, this argument would change, Grünberger says.

Is Grünberger concerned that ORF may have a financial deal with Facebook? "No, but I can't rule out that it might happen in the future. ORF could argue that Facebook was getting

³⁸ ORF Gesetz, RTR Rundfunk und Telekom Regulierung <https://www.rtr.at/de/m/ORFG#p4f>

³⁹ Interview with Gerald Grünberger in September 2012, Vienna



a lot of traffic from its content, so ORF could suggest splitting the revenue somehow.” A new media law (ORF Gesetz) should clearly state that there must not be a financial arrangement between ORF and social networks, Grünberger says.

ORF CAN'T HAVE IT ALL

The private broadcast media use a different argument against ORF’s social media presence. ORF is not living up to its public value obligation, says Klaus Schweighofer, who represents the Austrian private broadcast media (Verband Österreichischer Privatsender). His criticism is that ORF’s TV channel ORF 1 and its radio station Ö3 are earning advertising revenue with content which is too similar to private broadcasting.⁴⁰

He argues that ORF should reduce advertising revenue as a source of income and produce more public value programmes with license fees. If ORF had less advertising revenue, he would not dispute ORF’s social media presence. “It would be a completely different argument”, Schweighofer says. With less advertising revenue, ORF could be allowed to share its content via social media, for example via share buttons attached to its TV and radio content online.

Schweighofer thinks half of the advertising revenue that now goes to ORF, could be diverted to the private broadcast media, around 150 million Euros a year. “That would make our finances more stable.”

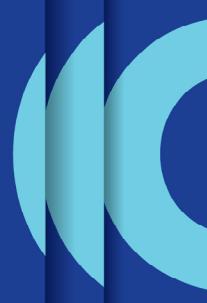
“It would be good for ORF and its journalists if they didn’t have to worry about advertising revenue and could focus on making good programmes, instead.”

As long as ORF has advertising revenue it should not be allowed to fully use all advertising channels, Schweighofer says. If ORF wants social media, it should stop billboard advertisements, for example. He also challenges the argument that ORF cannot reach its young audience without social media, because it is still so powerful on air. “To argue that without these, in comparison, ‘Mickey Mouse channels’ [social media platforms] ORF is cut off from its audience, makes me laugh”. However, Austria’s private TV stations, such as ATV or Puls4 have a strong presence on social media.

ORF CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT ADVERTISING REVENUE

These arguments are not shared by ORF, says Thomas Prantner, who is in charge of ORF’s online activities: “ORF can only survive with advertising money. We have to deliver quality programmes and ratings, not only to create an interesting environment for the advertising industry, but also to meet the demands of the audience.

⁴⁰ Interview with Klaus Schweighofer in September 2012, Vienna



"In addition, only advertising revenue can help pay our costs. The German TV station ARD has ten times the license fee revenue, but newsrooms in Germany and Austria cost almost the same," Prantner argues.⁴¹

"ORF's opportunities for earning advertising revenues are already strongly limited", says Prantner. "TV and radio ads have time limits and there are limits for online ads.

"The competition thinks if they can limit ORF, they will get bigger. That's not the case. It's still up to the advertising client to decide where he wants to advertise. If a company can't advertise on ORF, it doesn't automatically mean it will go to the private media".

Prantner also makes clear: "We don't have business deals with social networks and I can rule out that we will have them."

According to Prantner, social media restrictions are a threat to ORF "because social media is a media reality like email or a smartphone. We need social media to connect to our audience, for feedback and to promote our programmes. Not allowing us to take part in this is like throwing us back into the media stone age".

These are the official arguments. A deadlock. But many other media experts, who prefer not to be quoted, told me a different story, a story about a political horse trading. ORF allegedly accepted limitations on social media activity in exchange for being allowed to have advertising revenue on its regional TV stations, for example, or in exchange for getting a refund from the state to make up for the loss in license fees from people who are exempt from paying it. Large sums of money were at stake for ORF. In comparison, social media was a smaller price to pay. Of course, Prantner did not confirm this, nor did Grünberger or Schweighofer comment on it.

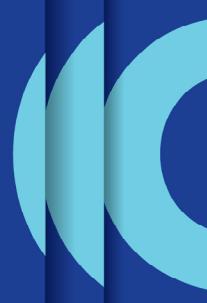
To sum up, the financial arguments of private media remain unclear. They are arguments of principle. Neither Schweighofer nor Grünberger can provide numbers that prove that ORF's social media presence, especially on Facebook, is hurting their online business.

I also tried to find out how much advertising revenue companies spend on ORF's Facebook pages, but Facebook said it didn't have any figures.⁴²

At the time this study goes to print, the court case is still pending and ORF's social media activities remain limited. The dispute with private media could be settled by the Austrian Constitutional Court in the coming months. At the latest, it could be settled by a new media law (ORF Gesetz).

⁴¹ Interview with Thomas Prantner in September 2012, Vienna

⁴² Inquiry with Nina Heine from Facebook Germany press team, December 2012



CREDITS

Polis is the international journalism and society think-tank at Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Write to Polis@lse.ac.uk for more details about their activities.

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Contact mediastrategy@ebu.ch for more information about the Radio News Group and Journalism Now.

The Journalism Now magazine and forum is online at <http://www.go-eurovision.com/cms/en/sites/ebu/ebuzz.html> and on Facebook at facebook.com/ebuzzNOW

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EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION

L'Ancienne-Route 17A
PO Box 45
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland

Tel. +41(0)22 717 21 11
Email: mediastrategy@ebu.com
www.eurovision.com

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